

IKE SKELTON
4TH DISTRICT, MISSOURI

2206 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-2504
TELEPHONE: (202) 225-2876
website: www.house.gov/skelton

514-B N.W. SEVEN HIGHWAY
BLUE SPRINGS, MO 64014-2733
(816) 228-4242

1401 SOUTHWEST BLVD., SUITE 101
JEFFERSON CITY, MO 65109-2429
(573) 635-3499

219 NORTH ADAMS STREET
LEBANON, MO 65536-3000
(417) 532-7964

908 THOMPSON BLVD.
SEDALIA, MO 65301-4593
(660) 826-2675

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2504
September 27, 2005

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
2240 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman,

We recently learned about a U.S. Department of Agriculture initiative known as "FSA Tomorrow." As we understand it, this plan would redefine the office structure and functions of the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and would likely result in staff reductions and office closures.

USDA has not fully informed all Members of Congress of its plans to overhaul FSA and has only released documents in a piecemeal fashion. It appears that most of the information obtained by Congress has been leaked by concerned citizens and employees of the Department rather than openly distributed to all House and Senate members by the Executive Branch officials who are accountable to the American people through the United States Congress.

We think it is fair to say that Members of Congress do not know what USDA intends to accomplish with "FSA Tomorrow." From what little information we have received, this plan appears to be an attempt to downsize FSA and diminish a critical agricultural link between Washington and rural America. While we are trying to learn the breadth of USDA's proposal, it seems ill advised to make it more difficult for producers to access FSA offices at a time when Congress is preparing to write a new farm bill and when natural disasters are prevalent throughout the countryside.

In order to help Members of Congress and the American people gain a better understanding of USDA's true intent, the House Agriculture Committee should immediately hold hearings to examine the "FSA Tomorrow" initiative. Producers, FSA employees, commodity groups, and the Executive Branch should have the opportunity to fully explain their views on "FSA Tomorrow" and determine how these policy changes will impact them. It would also be wise to investigate whether USDA is overstepping its bounds by administering changes at the FSA that may not meet the approval of Congress.

We look forward to hearing back from you in the very near future.

Sincerely,



IKE SKELTON
Member of Congress



MARION BERRY
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Collin C. Peterson
Ranking Member